

**CHAPLAIN ALLIANCE FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY**

September 5, 2015 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact CHAPLAIN ENDORSERS at [info@chaplainalliance.org](mailto:info@chaplainalliance.org), or call 571-293-2427

## **Navy quashes effort to fire chaplain who counseled according to his beliefs**

**MILLINGTON, Tenn.** — Top Navy officials have quashed an effort by a commander at the Nuclear Power Training Command in South Carolina to fire a chaplain. Capt. J.R. Fahs relieved Lt. Cmdr. Chaplain Wes Modder from duty allegedly because he offered counseling on sexuality consistent with his Christian faith.

[Fahs recommended that Modder be “detached for cause”](#) after some service members who went to the chaplain filed a complaint against him for offering counsel they didn’t agree with but was nonetheless consistent with the chaplain’s faith. Navy Personnel Command rejected the recommendation Thursday, saying that the “evidence of substandard performance in this case does not meet the standard of gross negligence or complete disregard for duty” that Navy rules require for a detachment for cause.

“The Navy should be commended for ruling in accord with its own understanding and expectation that chaplains provide counsel according to the tenets of their faith,” said Chaplain (COL) Ron Crews, USA Retired, executive director of Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty. “No disciplinary action, then, can cite his religious views or his verbalization of them as a cause for the action. Further, Congress passed language in the National Defense Authorization Act to make clear that chaplains who provide ministry from their faith tradition are protected from adverse actions by command.”

A detachment for cause is filed into an officer’s record and can trigger a board that ends the officer’s service. The Navy’s decision leaves Modder in good standing.

After the repeal of the so-called “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy, the Navy issued [guidance](#) to chaplains that they “are not required to take actions that are inconsistent with their religious beliefs (e.g., altering the content of sermons or religious counseling...).”

The complaint filed against Modder provided no evidence that the counseling he provided was in any way inconsistent with his denomination’s doctrinal statements on sexual behavior. The Assemblies of God’s doctrinal position on sexual behavior is similar to the vast majority of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim teachings on the subject.

“Regardless of what a person may think of a chaplain’s beliefs and how he espouses them, he certainly has the right and freedom to speak and counsel according to those beliefs,” Crews explained. “No Americans, especially those who wear the uniform and fight to protect our freedoms, should have to fear that they will be unjustly scrutinized simply for speaking about their sincerely held, biblical beliefs. We hope the Navy’s decision in this situation will provide encouragement to other chaplains who may fear reprisal simply for living out their beliefs.”

***[The Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty](#) is an organization of chaplain endorsers, the faith groups that provide chaplains for the U.S. military and other agencies needing chaplains. The endorsers in the Chaplain Alliance speak for more than 2,600 chaplains serving the armed forces.***